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Engraved on Steel by H. Adland.

Wm EMERSON,

BORN 14TH MAY 1701. DIED 21ST MAY 1782.

Engraved for the Mechanics Magazine Vol. V. from the only Original Painting, which is now in the possession of Dr Cloudsley, of Darlington.

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SOME ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE

OF

Mr. WILLIAM EMERSON.

By the Rev. W. BOWE,

Of Scorton, near Catterick, Yorkshire.

LONDON:

Printed for F. WINGRAVE,

Succeſſor to Mr. NOURSE, in the *Strand*.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF Mr. WILLIAM EMERSON.

THE Writer of the following Memoirs judges it proper to premiſe from what ſources he has derived his information. He had the good fortune to be perſonally acquainted with Mr. Emerson during the laſt three or four years of his life; and enjoyed frequent opportunities of learning, from his own mouth, accounts of circumſtances which had taken place at former periods of his life. He has alſo had frequent converſations reſpecting him with ſeveral perſons of veracity, who knew him many years before. He has not, however, accumulated an indiſcriminate maſs of anecdotes, as they were offered to him, but has rejected ſuch as did not appear to him to be authentic, and adopted ſuch only as upon mature examination and enquiry, he had reaſon to think true. In ſhort, he has endeavoured to form and exhibit as juſt a picture of Mr. Emerson's Life as he could, under ſome peculiar difficulties; and his motive for publiſhing it was a deſire to gratify, in ſome meaſure, that curioſity, which mankind muſt always entertain, to be informed of whatever has relation to thoſe men, who have drawn the

attention of their fellow-creatures by the ſuperior ſplendor of their talents, and who have enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge.*

Mr. DUDLEY EMERSON, of *Hurworth*, near *Darlington*, in the County of *Durham*, had two Sons, WILLIAM, the elder, and DUDLEY, who died whilſt he was young. WILLIAM, who afterwards lived to become ſo eminent a Mathematician, was born at *Hurworth*, in the year 1701, and, as appears by the Pariſh Regiſter, was baptized there on the 10th of June in that year.

" In a vacant leaf of an old prayer book, in " which DUDLEY EMERSON, the father of " WILLIAM, had regiſtered his marriage, and " the births of his ſeveral children, it is written, " William Emerſon was born Wedneſday, " May 14, at one o'clock in the morning, and " 40 minutes, and baptized June 10, 1701."

His father DUDLEY who was poſſeſſed of but a ſmall eſtate, at that time taught a ſchool, and ſeems to have thought himſelf of ſome little conſequence in the world, for I have ſeen a paper, written by himſelf, containing what he calls an account of the principal tranſactions or events of his life. Amongſt theſe *memorabilia*, relating, I think, chiefly to his movements from one place to another, I obſerved nothing reſpecting the birth or education of his ſon *William*; which he did not foreſee would be the only circumſtances or events of any importance in his life, that might poſſibly reſcue his name from oblivion.

William

* " Several circumſtances and anecdotes have been inter- " mixed with Mr. BOWE's narrative, or ſubjoined to it as " notes. Theſe were partly taken from other accounts of " Mr. EMERSON, and partly communicated by gentlemen " who had a perſonal acquaintance with him."

William was taught, and principally by his father, reading, writing and arithmetic, and a little Latin, perhaps as far as *Cordery*, or *Beza's Latin Teſtament*.* It does not appear, however, that he was much attached to his books whilſt a boy, or exhibited any ſymptoms of thoſe ſuperior faculties, which he afterwards exerted with ſo much energy. Indeed ſo careleſs and inattentive to learning was he, at this period, that I have heard him ſay, till he was near twenty years of age, his principal and favourite employment, for one ſeaſon of the year, was that of ſeeking birds neſts. But his attachment to childiſh amuſements was now to paſs away; and his mind began to be ſenſible of the charms and beauties of ſcience. He went firſt to Newcaſtle, and afterwards to York, where he applied himſelf, with conſiderable attention and diligence, to the ſtudy of the Mathematics, under the direction of ſchoolmaſters, whoſe names I do not remember, but of whom he uſed to ſpeak, in the latter part of his life, with much reſpect. "He "uſed to ſay too, that his father was a tolerable "Mathematician; and, without his books and "inſtructions, perhaps his own genius (moſt "eminently fitted for mathematical diſquiſitions) "would never have been unfolded."

After his return from the ſchool at York, he reſided principally at Hurworth, where he continued to purſue his ſtudies and amuſements, at intervals, until the time of his marriage. In what year of his life this happened I do not exactly know, but I think it was about the thirty-ſecond or thirty-third: and from this

* "He afterwards received ſome aſſiſtance in the learned "languages from a young gentleman, then curate of "Hurworth, who was boarded at his father's houſe."

period we muſt date the commencement of his mathematical *labors*; or perhaps rather the communication of them to the public. What he had done before in this line, was merely an occaſional application, for his own amuſement, or for the exerciſe and improvement of his leiſure hours. But one of thoſe accidents, which, as Dr. Johnſon obſerves in the Life of Cowley, "produce that particular deſignation of mind and propenſity for ſome certain ſcience, commonly called genius," took place upon this occaſion, and added a powerful ſtimulus to his native thirſt for knowledge and for fame. His wife was the Niece of a Doctor Johnſon, Rector of Hurworth, Vicar of Manfield in the county of York, and a Prebendary of Durham, a man very eminent in his time for his ſkill in ſurgery, and who, by a very extenſive and ſucceſsful practice in this profeſſion, together with the emoluments ariſing from his livings, had accumulated a conſiderable fortune. Dr. Johnſon had promiſed to give his niece, who lived with him, five hundred pounds for her marriage portion. Some time after the marriage, Mr. EMERSON took an opportunity to mention this matter to the Doctor, and to remind him of his promiſe. The Doctor, however, did not recollect, or did not chuſe to recollect, any thing of it, but treated our young Mathematician with ſome contempt, as a perſon of no conſequence, and beneath his notice. The pecuniary diſappointment, EMERSON (who had as independent a ſpirit as any man, and whoſe patrimony, though not large, was equal to all his wants) would eaſily have ſurmounted, but this contemptuous treatment ſtung him to the very ſoul. He immediately went home, packed up all his wife's cloaths,

and

and ſent them off to the Doctor, ſaying that he would ſcorn to be beholden to ſuch a fellow for a ſingle rag; and ſwearing at the ſame time that he would be revenged, and prove himſelf to be the better man of the two. His plan of revenge was truly noble and laudable.—He was reſolved to demonſtrate to his uncourteous uncle and to the world, that he was not to be rated as an inſignificant or ignorant perſon; and that the contempt and indignity, with which he had been treated, were much miſplaced, and very unmerited: and, in order to demonſtrate this, he determined to labour till he became one of the firſt Mathematicians of the age.

He had received from nature a ſtrong and vigorous mind, and had acquired a juſt reliſh for the beauties of Mathematical Science, and an ardent love of Truth; he was at the ſame time, ſtimulated with an eager deſire of diſtinguiſhing himſelf from the illiterate crowd of mortals: the effects of his labor, influenced by ſuch motives, and directed by ſuch abilities, could not therefore but be great. He made himſelf a perfect maſter of the whole circle of the Mathematics; and after having carefully planned and digeſted, reviſed and compleated the work to his own ſatisfaction, he publiſhed, in the forty-ſecond year of his age, his book of *Fluxions*; and at his firſt appearance in the world as an author, ſtepped forth like a giant in all his might, and juſtly claimed a place amongſt Mathematicians of the very firſt rank. By the ſtrictly ſcientific manner in which he eſtabliſhed the principles, and demonſtrated the truth of the method of Fluxions in this work, he added another firm and durable ſupport to the noble edifice of the Newtonian Philoſophy, which, by ſome leſs accurate and penetrating obſervers, was

ſuppoſed to have received a violent and dangerous concuſſion from the metaphyſical artillery of the *analyſt*, and the cavils and objections which had been advanced againſt the truth of the fluxionary method.

Having thus ſecured his mathematical fame upon a firm and ſolid Baſis, he continued from time to time to favour and inſtruct the publick with other moſt valuable publications upon the ſeveral branches of the Mathematics. Theſe appeared in the order in which they ſtand arranged below: I have added to each the date of the Author's life.*

Years.	Ætat. An.	
1743 .	42	Fluxions, 8vo.
1749 .	48	Projections of the Sphere, and Elements of Trigonometry, 8vo.
1754 .	53	Mechanics, 4to.
1755 .	54	Navigation, 12mo.
1763 .	62	Arithmetic, Geometry, 8vo. Method of Increments, 4to
1764 .	63	Algebra, 8vo.
1767 .	66	Arithmetic of Infinites and Conic Sections, 8vo.
1768 .	67	Elements of Optics and Perſpective, 8vo.
1769 .	68	Aſtronomy, Mechanics, Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces, 8vo.
1770 .	69	Mathematical Principles of Geography, Navigation and Dialling, Comment on the Principia, with the Defence of Newton. Tracts, 8vo.
1776 .	75	Miſcellanies, 8vo. which was his laſt work.

The above Works, many of them allowed to be the beſt extent upon the ſubjects of which they treat, will remain a laſting monument of Mr. EMERSON's genius, penetration and induſtry to

* New editions of ſeveral of the above works have ſince been publiſhed, with improvements, communicated from the Author, by F. WINGRAVE, Succeſſor to Mr. NOURSE, Bookſeller in the Strand.

to the lateſt times; and render any further eulogium of their Author, as a Man of Science, totally unneceſſary.

" His firſt publications however did not meet with immediate encouragement; ſo that it is probable the reſt would never have appeared, or, at leaſt not in the Author's life time, had he not about the year 1763, been recommended, by his great admirer and friend the late EDWARD MONTAGU, Eſqr. to Mr. JOHN NOURSE, Bookſeller in London, who was himſelf an eminent Mathematician, and well ſkilled in the Newtonian Philoſophy, having had an univerſity education, and been an early aſſociate with the learned Doctors Pemberton and Wilſon, the one the companion of Newton, and Editor of the beſt edition of the Principia, the other of Mr. Robins's Mathematical Tracts. Mr. NOURSE was ſo highly ſenſible of Mr. EMERSON's ſuperior abilities, that he engaged him on very liberal terms, to furniſh a regular courſe of the Mathematics for the uſe of young ſtudents. Mr. EMERSON made a journey to London in the ſummer of the year 1763, to ſettle and fulfil this agreement. Even in London he could not be idle: beſides correcting his ſheets for the preſs,* he took lodgings at a Watchmaker's, near Smithfield, that he might improve himſelf, in that branch of knowledge during his ſtay there."

" Beſides the above regular works, publiſhed in Mr. EMERSON's own name, he wrote ſeveral other fugitive pieces, in the Ladies Diaries and other periodical and miſcellaneous works. In the Ladies Diaries he propoſed and anſwered ſeveral new queſtions under the ſignature *Meroues*, an anagram

* " He always made the reviſal himſelf; to truſt no eyes " but his own, being a favourite maxim with him."

anagram of his own name, containing all the letters of it tranſpoſed; the queſtions reſolved by him were as follows, viz. prize, 1736; queſt. 193, 195, 197; prize, 1737; queſt. 205, 206, 207, 209, 210, 215, 217, 221, 223; prize, 1741; queſt. 226, 229; prize, 1742; queſt, 238, 240: and he propoſed the following new queſtions; No. 193, 206, and 220*. Mr. EMERSON alſo took a part in the *Miſcellanea Curioſa Mathematica*, a work publiſhed in quarterly numbers, by Mr. FRANCIS HOLLIDAY, (his friend and correſpondent) from the year 1745 till 1755, in 4to. In this work he reſolved many queſtions, as before in the Diaries, ſometimes under the ſignature of *Merones*, and ſometimes under the ſtill more whimſical one of *Philofluentimechanalgegeomaſtrolongo*; and probably under ſeveral others." We ſhall now take a view of Mr. EMERSON in his private life, as a man, and a member of ſociety.

Mr. EMERSON was, in perſon, ſomething below the common ſize, but firm, compact, well-made, very active and ſtrong. He had a good, open, expreſſive countenance, with a ruddy complexion, a keen and penetrating eye, and an ardor and eagerneſs of look that was very expreſſive of the texture of his mind. His dreſs was very ſimple and plain, or, what, by the generality of people, perhaps would have been called groteſque and ſhabby. A very few hats ſerved him through the whole courſe of his life, and when he purchaſed one (or indeed any other article of dreſs) it was a matter of perfect indifference

* "See the *Diarian Miſcellany*; which is a republication "of all the uſeful parts of the Ladies Diaries, by Dr. "HUTTON In the Diaries, &c. Mr. EMERSON had alſo "ſome warm controverſies with Wadſon (Mr. Dawſon of "Sedbergh) and other eminent Mathematicians."

ference to him, whether the form and faſhion of it was that of the day, or of half a century before. One of theſe hats, of immenſe ſuperficies, had in length of time loſt its elaſticity, and the brim of it began to droop in ſuch a manner as to prevent his being able to view the objects before him in a direct line. This was not to be endured by an optician: he therefore took a pair of ſheers, and cut it round cloſe by the body of the hat, leaving a little to the front, which he dexterouſly rounded into the reſemblance of the nib of a jockey's cap. His wigs were made of brown or a dirty flaxen coloured hair, which at firſt appeared buſhy and tortuous behind, but which grew pendulous through age, till at length it became quite ſtraight, having probably never undergone the operation of the comb: and either through the original mal-conformation of the wig, or from a cuſtom he had of frequently inſerting his hand beneath it, his hind-head and wig never came in very cloſe contact. His coat, or more properly jacket, or waiſtcoat with ſleeves to it, which he commonly wore without any other waiſtcoat, was of a drab colour. His linen came not from *Holland* or *Hibernia*, but was ſpun and bleached by his wife, and woven at *Hurworth*, being calculated more for warmth and duration than for ſhew. He had a ſingular cuſtom of frequently wearing, eſpecially in cold weather, his ſhirt with the wrong ſide before, and buttoned behind the neck. But this was not an *affectation* of ſingularity (for EMERSON had no *affectation* about him, though his cuſtoms and manners were ſingular:) he had a *reaſon* for it;—he ſeldom buttoned more than two or three of the buttons of his waiſtcoat, one or two at the bottom, and ſometimes one at the top; leaving all the reſt open.

open. In wind, rain or ſnow, therefore, he muſt have found the aperture at the breaſt inconvenient, if his ſhirt had been put on in the uſual manner. His breeches had an antique appearance, the lappet before not being ſupported by two buttons, placed in a line *parallel* to the plane of the horizon, but by buttons deſcending in a line *perpendicular* to it. In cold weather he uſed to wear, when he grew old, what he called *ſhin-covers*. Now theſe *ſhin-covers* were made of old ſacking, tied with a ſtring above the knee, and depending before the ſhins down to the ſhoe; they were uſeful in preſerving his legs from being burnt, when he ſate too near the fire (which old people are apt to do;) and if they had their *uſe*, he was not ſolicitous about the figure or appearance they might make.

This ſingularity of dreſs and figure, together with his character for profound learning, and knowledge more than human, cauſed him to be conſidered, by ignorant and illiterate people in the neighbourhood, as a *wiſe* or *cunning man*, or *conjuror*: many of them are ſtill perſuaded that he was ſuch, and will tell you wonderful ſtories of the feats he performed, and particularly how by virtue of a magic ſpell, he pinned a fellow in the top of his pear or cherry tree, who had got up with a deſign to ſteal his fruit; and compelled him to ſit there a whole Sunday's forenoon, in full view of the congregation going to and returning from church. That he did compel a man to ſit for ſome time in the tree, I believe was a fact, not however by virtue of any magic ſpell, but by ſtanding at the bottom of the tree, with a hatchet in his hand, and ſwearing that if he came down he would *hag* (i.e. hew) *his legs off*. This opinion of his ſkill in the *Black-art*, was of ſervice in defending his property from ſuch depredations, and therefore

it

it would have been impolitic to diſcourage it: but he was apt to loſe his patience very much, when he was applied to for the recovery of ſtolen goods, or to inveſtigate the ſecrets of futurity. A woman came one day to him to enquire about her huſband, who had gone ſix years before to the Weſt Indies or America, and had not been heard of ſince. She requeſted therefore to be informed whether he was dead or living, as a man, in her neighbourhood, had made propoſals of marriage to her. It was with much difficulty the ſuppoſed *prophet* repreſſed the riſing *furor* till the concluſion of the tale; when riſing haſtily from the tripod, or three footed ſtool, on which he uſually ſate, in terms more energetic than ever iſſued from the ſhrine at Delphi; he gave this plain and unequivocal reſponſe; "D—n thee, for a bitch! thy huſband's gone to hell; and thou may go after him." The woman went away well pleaſed and ſatisfied with the anſwer ſhe had received, thinking ſhe might now liſten to the propoſals of her lover with a ſafe conſcience. Another young damſel, on a ſimilar errand, met with a milder reception. Her miſtreſs had loſt ſome caps, or linen, and ſhe wanted to know whether her fellow ſervant (of whom ſhe entertained ſuſpicions) had purloined them or not. "*Thou's a canny young laſs*, replied the ſmiling conjurer, *but thou's over late o'coming, I can do nought for the.*" The poor girl went away grieved that ſhe had not made her application ſooner, ſuppoſing he meant that the myſterious moment of divination was paſt. He was by many people alſo looked upon as an atheiſt, but he was as much an atheiſt as he was a magician. He firmly believed in the being of a God; he did not *believe* it, as he ſometimes ſaid, he *knew* it, he was *certain* of it to a demonſtration. But it muſt

be

be acknowledged, that he did not always ſpeak of revealed religion, the Church of England or the clergy, in terms of reſpect. It has often been obſerved and lamented, that minds merely mathematical, are apt to tend towards ſcepticiſm and irreligion. The man who is always accuſtomed to demonſtrative proofs, and wholly engaged in a ſcience which admits of them at every ſtep, will not ſo readily acquieſce in a ſeries of probabilities, where inveſtigations of another kind are preſented to him; and perhaps will not have patience to examine circumſtances deeply enough to aſcertain, on which ſide there is a preponderancy of evidence amounting nearly to demonſtration. Beſides, EMERSON's reſentment at Dr. Johnſon's treatment of him, which I have mentioned before, might produce a bias on his mind unfavourable to religion. A man of his natural impetuoſity of temper would be too apt to aſſociate the idea of the *profeſſion* with that of the *profeſſor*; and becauſe he had quarrelled with the *prieſt*, would alſo quarrel with his *doctrine*. Under the influence of this prepoſſeſſion, he ſet himſelf to work to examine the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, and collected two ſmall 4to. vols. of what he conceived to be contradictory paſſages; and arranged them, like hoſtile troops confronting each other, on the oppoſite pages of his book.

His diet was as ſimple and plain as his dreſs, and his meals gave little interruption to his ſtudies, employments or amuſements. During his days of cloſe application, he ſeldom ſat down to eat, but would take a piece of cold pye or meat of any kind in his hand, and retiring with it to his place of ſtudy, could ſatisfy his appetite for knowledge and food at the ſame time. He catered for himſelf, and pretty conſtantly made

made his own market. When his ſtock of groceries, or other neceſſaries in the article of houſekeeping, grew low, on the Monday morning he took his *wallet*, which he flung obliquely acroſs his ſhoulders, and ſet forward for the market at Darlington, three miles diſtant from Hurworth; whither he always walked on foot, for he ſeldom or never kept a horſe, and had an averſion to riding. "He would frequently lead "the horſe, when he had one, from market, by "the halter, bearing the wallet ſtuffed with the "proviſions he had bought at market." After having provided all the neceſſary articles he did not always make directly home again, but, if he found good fair ale, and company to his mind, he would ſit himſelf down contentedly in ſome public houſe, for the remainder of the day, and frequently during the night too; ſome times he did not reach home till late on Tueſday or even Wedneſday; he remained talking, or diſputing on various topics, mechanics, politics or religion, juſt as his company might be, varying the ſcene ſometimes with a beef-ſtake, mutton-chop, or a pan of cockles; for it is remarkable that his ale did not injure, but rather improve his appetite; and that he never felt the head-ach, or any immediate ill effects afterwards. In theſe *durable* potations, he would ſometimes indulge, not only at Darlington, but in Hurworth, or ſome neighbouring village, and always in an ale-houſe, for he kept no ſtock of ale at home; and he was upon all occaſions rigidly exact in apportioning each man's quota of the reckoning. The laſt time he made an excurſion to Darlington with his wallet, our Philoſopher made a figure truly conſpicuous: this was the only time, I believe, he ever rode thither,

and

and he was then mounted on a quadruped, whoſe intrinſic value, independent of the ſkin, might be fairly eſtimated at half a crown. Being preceded and led by a boy hired for that purpoſe, he crawled in ſlow and ſolemn ſtate, at the rate of a mile and a half in an hour, till in due time he arrived at Darlington, and was conducted in the ſame ſtate, to the great entertainment of the ſpectators through the ſtreets to the inn, where he wiſhed to refreſh himſelf and his beaſt. What idea EMERSON himſelf entertained of the velocity with which the animal could move, appears from this, that when a neighbour of his from Hurworth aſked him towards the evening, if he was going home? *D—n thee* (ſays he) *what does thou want with my going home?* Only, ſays the man, becauſe I ſhould be glad of your company.—*Thou fool, thou!* (rejoined the other) *Thou'lt be home long enough before me, man! thou walks and I ride.* We muſt obſerve, that ſuch expreſſions as *D—n thee*, and *thou fool*, were mere expletives often with him, expreſſive neither of indignation nor contempt.

His ſtyle in converſation was generally very abrupt and blunt, abounding in ſuch expletives as the above, and often vulgar and ungrammatical. And this was the reaſon that led many people to ſuppoſe, he could not be able to write any thing like grammar, or tolerable Engliſh, and that his prefaces therefore, ſome of which are not ill written, could not be his own compoſition, but muſt have been made, or at leaſt tranſlated into Engliſh for him by ſome other hand. But we cannot, with certainty, judge how a man will write from his language in common converſation. Though EMERSON was no accurate grammarian, his reading was extenſive enough to ſupply him with a ſufficient

a ſufficient ſtock of proper words and expreſſions on ſuch ſubjects as he had occaſion to treat of, and the vigour and energy of his mind would give force, weight and perſpicuity to his ſentences. He was one day told, that this opinion reſpecting his prefaces was entertained by many; and the diſparity of his converſation and writing was pointed out as the reaſon of it. After a momentary pauſe he exclaimed, with ſome indignation: *A pack of fools! who could write my prefaces but my ſelf?* They do in fact carry with them every mark of legitimacy; they could have no other father. Indeed the original prefaces, as well as the original MSS. of moſt of the Author's works, in his own hand writing, with a great number of his original letters, are now in the poſſeſſion of the publiſher, all of which are well written, and in a good ſtile. There are alſo, in ſome of them, quotations from the Greek Authors, elegantly written by himſelf. In the earlier part of his life, principally by the aid of his Dictionary, he had acquired a ſtock of latin, ſufficient to enable him to read and tranſlate mathematical works in that language: and he once had a deſign to give a tranſlation of the Jeſuits comment, on the Principia. It appears alſo from his *mottos* to his ſeveral books, that he ſometimes *dipped* into the Claſſic Authors, for we muſt not ſuſpect him of having been *much converſant* with ſuch gentry as *Lucretius*, *Horace* and *Virgil*. He had in his library *Homer* and *Virgil traveſtied*, and theſe he read with more pleaſure than *Pope's* or *Dryden's* tranſlations. In arguments or diſputes, whether in converſation or writing, the fire and impetuoſity of his temper was too apt to break forth, and betray him into the uſe of ſuch terms, as ſhould always be avoided, eſpecially by Mathematicians and Philoſophers, whoſe employment

is, or ought to be, the cool and diſpaſſionate ſearch after truth. His zeal in ſupport of Sir Iſaac Newton is outrageous, and he has treated the oppugners of his Philoſophy as if he had a perſonal quarrel againſt them. "*J. Bernoulli* (according to him) is a low critic, laborious and tedious to the laſt degree: a blunderbuſs, a perſon of eternal contradiction, blind, bigotted, prejudiced, mad; and a whole ſection of 100 pages is nothing but a heap of abſurd, inconſiſtent ſtuff." He therefore leaves him (in his great mercy) to be drowned in a gurges of his own contriving. *Euler* receives no milder treatment: he is vortex-mad too, and is one of thoſe bigotted Philoſophers, whoſe brains are turned in a vortex, or they never would prefer ſuch complex vortical ſchemes before the ſimple doctrine of projectile and centripetal forces. Such Philoſophers! exclaims our indignant defender. Leibnitz's attempt to rob Sir Iſaac Newton of the honour of the invention of Fluxions, is, as we might expect, a cauſe ſufficient to make him rave with rage, and to call down all the thunder of his indignation. To tell us flatly "that not he that firſt *found*, but he that firſt *publiſhed*, deſerves the praiſe," is an aſſertion that might move the bile in a ſtomach leſs apt to boil than EMERSON's. It is robbing, as he truly ſays, the inventor of his due praiſe to give it to the thief that ſtole it. But however much Sir Iſaac might have approved of Mr. EMERSON as the *champion* or *defender* of his principles, he would not have admired the *weapons* he ſometimes made uſe of.

In ſo difficult a problem as EMERSON himſelf allows that of finding the preceſſion of the equinoxes to be, one would have thought that he would have had ſome patience with thoſe who differ

differ from Sir Iſaac and himſelf. But theſe are a *clan*, and Mr T. Simpſon has the misfortune to be one of the *clan*. There ſeems, unfortunately, to have ſubſiſted ſome kind of animoſity or jealouſy between theſe two great contemporary Mathematicians, excited and fomented perhaps by ſome, who were mean enough to carry tales between them, in order to curry favor. One of EMERSON's correſpondents, in London, informed him that Simpſon had ſaid, in company with ſome mathematical friends, " that he took EMERSON (referring to his book of Fluxions) to be an induſtrious, plodding writer, but a man of no genius." This was quite enough to irritate EMERSON to acts of hoſtility.

We meet with frequent complaints in his books of the little encouragement given to mathematical learning in his time, and eſpecially in England. How far this complaint may be well or ill founded, I know not, but this is pretty certain, that if any reward or recompenſe had been offered to him for his mathematical labors, and had not come to him in his own way, he would not have accepted it. He did not wiſh to be admitted a fellow of the Royal Society, " *becauſe* (he ſaid) *it was a d—n'd hard thing that a man ſhould burn ſo many farthing candles as he had done, and then have to pay ſo much a year for the honor of F. R. S. after his name. D—n them and their F. R. S. too.*" He reaped one reward of his toils in queſt of ſcience, which was very acceptable and grateful to him; and that was the acquaintance and friendſhip of *Mr. Montagu*, who having an eſtate at Fryholme, near Hurworth, ſometimes viſited that neighbourhood, and ſpent a good part of his time in company and converſation with EMERSON, and at his deceaſe bequeathed to him a legacy of 100l. or guineas.

When Mrs. Montagu's agent called upon him to diſcharge this legacy, EMERSON told him he would much rather have ſeen Mr. Montagu himſelf than his money. And he ſpoke, doubtleſs, from his heart, for he never mentioned Mr. Montagu's name but in terms that ſtrongly expreſſed the ſincerity and ardor of his affection and eſteem for him.

" Mr. Montagu, in his viſits to EMERSON, would often go to him in the fields, when he happened to be at work there, and would accompany him home, but could never perſuade him to get into a carriage. On theſe occaſions he would ſometimes exclaim, " D--n your whim-wham! I had rather walk."

' Inheriting a ſmall patrimonial eſtate, of about 60 or 70 pounds a year, he was as independent, and happy as if he had enjoyed ſo many thouſands. He was never known to aſk a favour, or ſeek the acquaintance of a rich man, unleſs he poſſeſſed ſome eminent qualities of the mind.' " Notwithſtanding his imperfect and deſultory courſe of education, he acquired a general knowledge of moſt ſciences. He had even paid attention to medicine, at leaſt ſo far as it has been combined with mathematical principles, according to the plan of Keil, Morgan, &c. He eſteemed Morgan above all others as a phyſician: and held Keil to be the beſt of anatomiſts.

" Mr. EMERSON often tried in practice the effect of his mathematical ſpeculations, by conſtructing a variety of inſtruments, mathematical, mechanical, or muſical, on a ſmall ſcale. He made a ſpinning wheel for his wife, which is repreſented by a drawing in his book of Mechanics. He was well ſkilled in the ſcience of muſic, the theory of ſounds, and the various

" ſcales,

" ſcales, both ancient and modern; but he was
" a very poor performer, though he ſometimes
" obliged his friends in the country by tuning
" and repairing their muſical inſtruments. He
" carried that ſingularity which marked all his
" actions even into this ſcience. He had, if I
" may be allowed the expreſſion, two firſt ſtrings
" to his violin, which he ſaid made the E more
" melodious when they were drawn up to a perfect
" uniſon. His virginal, which is a ſpecies of in-
" ſtrument like the modern ſpinnet, he had cut
" and twiſted into various ſhapes in the keys, by
" adding ſome occaſional half-tones, to regulate
" the preſent ſcales, and to rectify ſome fraction
" or diſcord that will always remain in the tuning.
" This he never could get regulated to his mind,
" and generally concluded in a paſſion by ſaying,
" It is a d—mn'd inſtrument, and a fooliſh thing
" to be vexed with."

" Mr. EMERSON was very fond of angling, and
" while he thus amuſed himſelf, would ſtand up
" to his middle in water for ſeveral hours toge-
" ther.—When he was building a houſe upon the
" ſmall farm which he poſſeſſed by the ſide of
" the Tees, he never heſitated to plunge into the
" water, for the purpoſe of collecting ſtones
" from the bed of the river. He was affected,
" about that time, with ſome ſlight gouty
" ſymptoms, and ſaid, that *wading* was ſervice-
" able to him, becauſe the water ſucked the gout
" out of his legs; a theory for which he was
" probably not indebted to his favourite Keil or
" Morgan. When he wrote his treatiſe on
" Navigation, he muſt needs make and fit up a
" ſmall veſſel; with this he and ſome young
" friends embarked on the river Tees, that ran
" by his door at Hurworth; but the whole crew

" got

" got ſwampt frequently; when EMERSON, " ſmiling and alluding to his book, ſaid, They " muſt not do as I do, but as I ſay."

" In the earlier part of his life he attempted " to teach a few ſcholars; but whether from " his conciſe method, for he was not happy in " explaining his ideas, or the natural warmth of " his temper, he made little progreſs in his ſchool, " which he therefore ſoon dropped. He never " had a ſcholar that did him any credit except " Mr. Richardſon of Darlington, who was always " a great favourite with him, and of whom he " uſed to ſay, that he was the only boy who had " a head in his ſchool."

" Being requeſted once, by letter, to commu- " nicate ſome particulars of his life, by a friend " who wanted to put them together, he wrote for " anſwer, I never knew you were commenced " biographer before; they will have little to do, " I think, that ſet about writing my life: I am " ſure of this, half of it will be lies: therefore " I chuſe to die in the ſame obſcurity I have " lived."

During the greateſt part of his life he had enjoyed ſtrong and uninterrupted health; but as he advanced in years he was afflicted with the ſtone and gravel to an excruciating degree. In the agony of theſe fits he would crawl round the floor, on his hands and knees, ſometimes praying and ſometimes ſwearing, and devoutly wiſhing that the mechaniſm of the human frame had been ſo contrived as to go to wreck without all that *clitter-my-clatter*, as he called it; as he grew weaker the violence of the diſorder abated, and he died at laſt, apparently without much pain, on the 21ſt of May 1782, and in the 81ſt year of his age.

Mr.

" Mr. EMERSON, with much perſuaſion, about " a year before his deceaſe, was prevailed on by " his friend Dr. Cloudeſley, of Darlington, to " ſit for his picture, which was taken by Sikes, " and is now in the Doctor's poſſeſſion. Towards " the cloſe of the year 1781, being ſenſible of " his approaching diſſolution, he diſpoſed of the " whole of his mathematical library to a book- " ſeller at York: his inſtruments he had for " many years been in the habit of diſpoſing of, " at times, to different perſons, for a mere trifle. " When aſked, why he choſe to ſell his books, " he ſaid, he had none but a pack of fools to " leave them to, and money would be of more " ſervice to them than books. He valued his " library when it was ſent to York at 40 or 50*l.*"

EMERSON, like other great men, had his foibles and defects.—He was ſingular and uncouth in his dreſs and manners, and haſty and impetuous in his temper; but whatever failings he had, they were overbalanced by his virtues. He had a great, firm, and independent mind, that could not be brought to ſubmit to any thing mean, baſe or diſingenuous, by any power on earth: a pure, genuine, ardent love of truth, and deteſtation of falſhood of whatever ſpecies. His honeſty and intregrity were ſuch, that all who knew any thing of him, repoſed in him the moſt implicit confidence; and no man could ever juſtly complain that EMERSON had deceived him. He had great pleaſure in doing a good and friendly ſervice to any deſerving perſon, whenever he had it in his power; and under a rough and forbidding exterior he concealed a humane heart, that wiſhed to promote the welfare and happineſs of his fellow creatures.

He

He lies buried in the church-yard at Hurworth, at the weſt end of the church; againſt which is erected to his memory a ſtone with the following inſcription. His wife ſurvived him near two years; they had no children.

Quod ſub Pedibus ſepultum
Et neglectum jacet
Aliquando fuit
GULIELMUS EMERSON;
Vir
Priſcæ Simplicitatis,
Summæ integritatis,
Rariſſimi ingenii.
Quantus fuerit Mathematicus
Si ſcripta ejus perlegeris
Quorſum narraret ſaxum?
Si non perlegeris,
Perlege, et Scies.
Obiit 21° Mäij, 1782.
Ætat. An° 81.

Juxta ſepulta jacet
ELIZABETHA UXOR.
Quæ obiit 27° Martii, 1784,
Ætat. An. 76.